



October 2005

ZOOM

IN ON THE USA

A Monthly Publication of the USA Mission.

Volume II. Issue 19.

LOUISIANA

To say that the United States is one of the most diverse countries around the world would be obvious. The 48 mainland or continental states - excluding Alaska and Hawaii - sprawl across 4,500 kilometers and four time zones. A car trip from coast to coast typically takes a minimum of five days - and that's with almost no stops to look around. In this issue of Zoom we try to paint a picture of just one of the 50 American states. Before you go to the other pages take the quiz below. Maybe you already know everything about Louisiana?

Who is a famous Louisianan?

- a. Britney Spears, a pop singer
- b. Louis Armstrong, a legend of jazz
- c. both of the above

For a long period of time Louisiana belonged to:

- a. Mexico
- b. France
- c. Germany

The state is shaped like:

- a. a bottle
- b. a rectangle
- c. a boot

The biggest city in Louisiana, severely damaged by the Hurricane Katrina in August 2005 is:

- a. Tallulah
- b. Baton Rouge
- c. New Orleans

The state is named after:

- a. Louis Armstrong
- b. King Louis XIV of France
- c. an Indian tribe

A famous holiday celebrated annually in New Orleans is:

- a. Mardi Gras (French for "Fat Tuesday")
- b. Groundhog Day
- c. Chinese New Year

Cajun is:

- a. a member of a distinctive ethnic group in Louisiana
- b. a dialect of the French language
- c. both of the above

Check your answers on page 4.



Photo courtesy of Louisiana Office of Tourism - Birding in the Louisiana swamp; image of saxophone © Microsoft

The Pelican State

Louisiana, also called the **Pelican State** as a tribute to the official state bird, the brown pelican, has a unique culture due in part to its French colonial history. French is still spoken by nearly 5% of the state's population. It's present in local dialects and in many place names.

Two ethnic groups in Louisiana still have strong links with the French language and roots:

- the **Cajuns** of south Louisiana (about 700,000 people)
- the **Creoles** - black, French-speaking Catholic people of south Louisiana.

Both groups are famous for their music. The sounds of the **fiddle** and the **accordion** make their music distinctive by adding elements of the blues to capture the instruments' mood swings between the lively and the melancholic.

Cajuns and Creoles also share a passion for spicy cuisine including such dishes as **gumbo** (soup) and **jambalaya** (rice with vegetables and different kinds of meat or seafood).

Besides English, Cajuns speak a distinctive dialect, which combines archaic French with words taken from Spanish, English, German and native American languages.

Louisiana lies where the Mississippi River flows into the Gulf of Mexico. Baton Rouge is the capital city but New Orleans is the state's largest city and main tourist attraction.

Since colonial times Louisianans have built levees along the rivers to help control the water. However, on August 29th the rain from Hurricane Katrina flooded New Orleans when the levees failed to save the city. Katrina killed over 1,200 people and displaced a million, including nearly a quarter of a million school students.



New Orleans after Katrina.

U.S. Coast Guard photograph by Petty Officer 2nd Class Kyle Niemi

Hurricane Katrina Damage

Devastated Area: 233.100 km² (44.6% of the area of Spain)

Affected Population: 744,293 (1.75% of the population of Spain)

Website: www.fema.gov



Chicot State Park Lake,
Cajun Country, Louisiana

Image courtesy of Louisiana
Office of Tourism

"New Orleans food is as delicious as the less criminal forms of sin." Mark Twain

A VERY SIMPLE JAMBALAYA

- ½ cup of chopped onion
- ½ cup of chopped green pepper
- 1 crushed clove of garlic
- 2 tablespoons of butter
- 3 1/3 cups of canned tomatoes
- 1 cup water
- 1/8 teaspoon of cayenne pepper
- ½ teaspoon of thyme
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 2 cups of cooked chopped ham (smoked is best)
- ¾ cup of rice

1 cup is approximately 230 grams.

Convert units online at:

www.onlineconversion.com

Fry onion, green pepper and garlic in butter. Add tomatoes, water and spices. Stir until tomatoes are broken. Add the remaining ingredients. Cover and bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer under a cover for 30 minutes stirring from time to time. Serve with a fresh baguette.



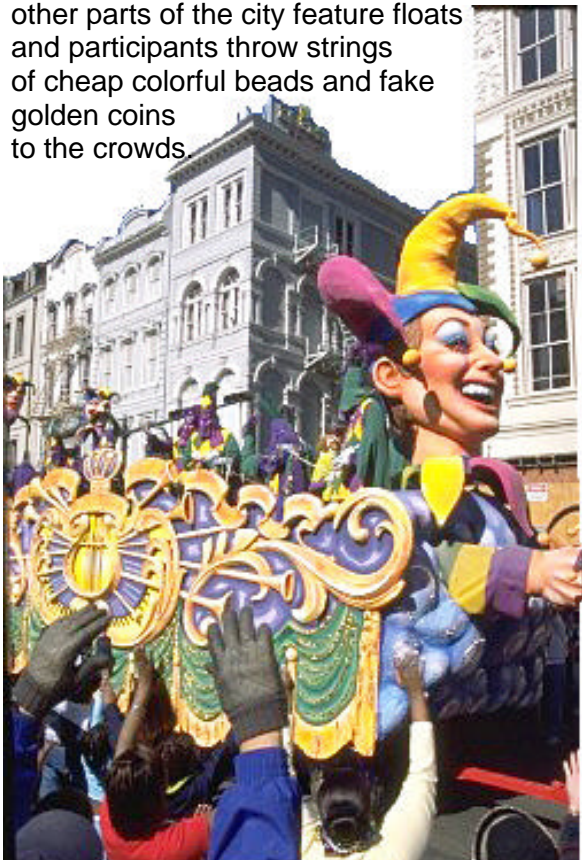
Louisiana peppers
Image courtesy of Louisiana
Office of Tourism

■ The Crescent City

New Orleans is the oldest city in the southern United States. It was founded in 1718 by the French and named first La Nouvelle-Orléans. Its nickname - the Crescent City - alludes to the fact that the oldest part of the city - the French Quarter - lay along a big curve in the Mississippi River. New Orleans has a population of about 480,000.

Mardi Gras parades

New Orleans is probably most famous for its Carnival Season whose last and most festive day is called Mardi Gras (French for "Fat Tuesday"). It falls just before the beginning of Lent. At Mardi Gras you can witness the only parade through the French Quarter called Krewe du Vieux. Parades in other parts of the city feature floats and participants throw strings of cheap colorful beads and fake golden coins to the crowds.



Language tip!

Specific rules apply to the usage of THE before geographic terms.

Don't use any article before:

mountains: Mount McKinley

continents: North America

towns: Mandeville

cities: New Orleans

villages: Elmwood

parks: Audubon Park

lakes: Lake Michigan

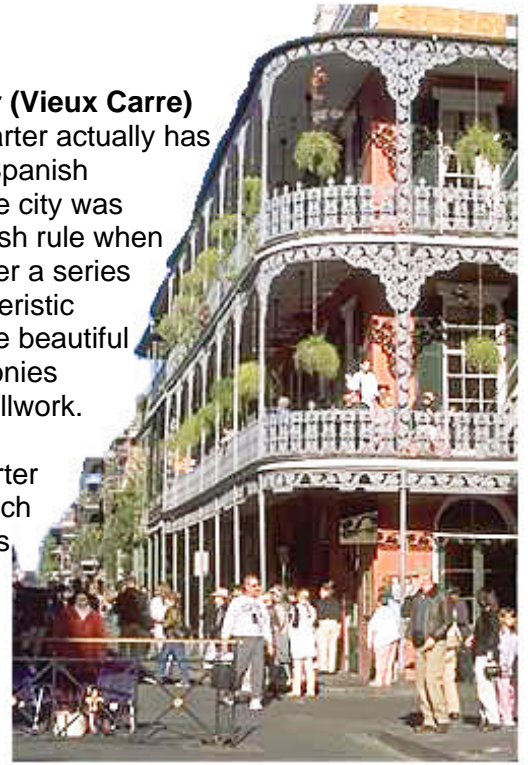
countries whose name is one word - Poland

streets: Bourbon Street

squares: French Square

French Quarter (Vieux Carre)

The French Quarter actually has predominantly Spanish architecture. The city was under the Spanish rule when it was rebuilt after a series of fires. Characteristic elements include beautiful patios and balconies with lacy iron grillwork. Landmarks in the French Quarter include the French Market, St. Louis Cathedral and Bourbon Street.



Jazz performances

The largest of the many musical festivals held in New Orleans is the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival. It is one of the largest music festivals in the United States and features not only jazz but other kinds of music as well, including native Louisiana music. One of the most original New Orleans traditions is the "jazz funeral" with bands playing sad music on the way to the cemetery and happy jazz music on the way back. New Orleans was home to such famous musicians as Louis Armstrong, Mahalia Jackson, and the Marsalis family.



Image: Library of Congress

Images left and up are courtesy of Louisiana Office of Tourism Imagebase. Left: Mardi Gras Float in Rex Parade; up: Royal Street visitors

Movie tip!

Movies set partly or entirely in Louisiana:

The Big Easy (Querido detective) (1987)

Steel Magnolias (Magnolias de acero) (1989)

Interview With The Vampire (Entrevista con el vampiro) (1994)

Runaway Jury (El jurado) (2003)

Ray (2004)

Use THE before:

rivers - the Mississippi River

mountain ranges - the Rocky Mountains

groups of islands - the Florida Keys

deserts - the Mojave Desert

seas - the Caribbean Sea

oceans - the Atlantic

countries whose name includes a word such as

republic or state: the United States of America

Activity Page

Win a Prize!

To win a prize answer this question:

What was the name of the hurricane that flooded New Orleans?

Send your answer to irc@embusa.es

Give your name and address.

The deadline is December 15.

Good Luck!

The winners from the previous issue will soon receive their prizes by mail.

ZOOM
IN ON THE USA

About ZOOM

Zoom is online at www.embusa.es/irc/zoom

Contact us at irc@embusa.es

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08034 Barcelona

Answers to the quiz from page 1:

Who is a famous Louisianan? Both **Louis Armstrong** and **Britney Spears**
For a long period of time Louisiana belonged to **France**.

The state is shaped like a **boot**.

The biggest city in Louisiana, severely damaged by the Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, is **New Orleans**.

The state is named after **King Louis XIV of France**.

A famous holiday celebrated annually in New Orleans is **Mardi Gras** (French for "Fat Tuesday").

"Cajun" is both a member of a **distinctive ethnic group** in Louisiana and a **dialect of the French language**.

Find answers to activities on this page at www.embusa.es/irc/zoom.html

■ The Places

Decide whether to use "the" or no article in the blank spaces:

1. _____ Mississippi River has acted as a regional lifeline, moving settlers to new homes and foodstuffs to market.

2. Winds from _____ Pacific Ocean carry enough moisture to keep the land in the West sufficiently watered.

3. _____ Great Salt Lake, covering about 5,000 square kilometers today has a salt content much higher than that of the oceans.

4. _____ Fifth Avenue in _____ New York City is very popular with shoppers.

5. The two major mountain areas of _____ northern New England are _____ Green Mountains of _____ Vermont and _____ White Mountains of _____ New Hampshire.

6. The lowest and highest elevations in the contiguous United States, Death Valley and _____ Mount Whitney, respectively, are almost within sight of each other.

7. _____ Hawaiian archipelago is a string of islands and reefs, 3,300 kilometers long, that forms a broad arc in _____ Pacific Ocean.

8. _____ Central Park in _____ New York City has a reputation as a dangerous place, especially after dark.

9. _____ Czech Republic is a parliamentary democracy.

Some sentences quoted from Portrait of the USA available at: <http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/facts/factover/homepage.htm> and An Outline of American Geography: <http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/geography/>

■ The Numbers Issue

Many numbers are used in this issue. How do you pronounce them?

Example:

4,500 kilometers - *four thousand and five hundred kilometers* OR *four and a half thousand kilometers* OR *forty-five hundred kilometers*

King Louis XIV -

5% -

700,000 people -

August 29th -

1/2 teaspoon -

3/4 cup -

■ Glossary

To allude - to make an indirect reference

Beads - a necklace made from small round pieces of some material

Contamination - presence of harmful, often toxic substance

Contiguous - connecting without a break

To displace - to move from the usual location

Fiddle - a violin

Lent - the 40 weekdays of fasting before Easter

Levee - a stretch of land along the river raised to prevent it from flooding

Patio - same word as in Spanish

Sin - a violation of a religious law